

Overcoming Communication Problems in the Anticoagulation Service at Calderdale & Huddersfield (CHFT)

Harry Crank, Senior MLA, Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

The anticoagulation service at CHFT has over 4,600 active patients and holds 30+ phlebotomy-led community clinics with referrals from wards, GPs and other hospitals. Operating a shared care service, there are 110 GPs within CHFT's territory that are also involved in their patients' anticoagulation care.

The integration of Calderdale's patients into the Huddersfield DAWN system and the subsequent upgrade to DAWN AC Version 7 enabled a number of areas to be improved, specifically with regards to communication.

The process for producing patient dosing letters has seen the requirement to produce a yellow questionnaire/blood test request form; a separate dosing letter; 2 sticky labels for postage; and the hand-folding and enveloping of letters replaced by a single letter produced on the Economailer that incorporates dosage, sticker, blood test request form and questionnaire all in one. As part of the process, the letter is also machine folded and no longer requires an enveloped which has saved greatly on paper and time.

Likewise, dosage letters for GPs that would require printing, folding, sorting and delivery to the GPs via the internal mail room which could take around 3-4 days, are now sent to GPs via email through the GP portal. These are sent each night so that the GPs receive them in the morning and currently there are 8 different types of letter that are sent out.

Letters are sent from DAWN AC via email to a dedicated email server (the Trust Integration Engine) which determines GPs by an allocated code within DAWN AC to ensure the correct letters are sent to the correct GP.

The table below shows the number of GP dosage letters that have been sent since October 2012 when they started being distributed electronically and highlights the amount of paper and time saved by updating the process through DAWN AC.

October 2012	3234
November 2012	4192
December 2012	3482
January 2013	4524
February 2013	4212
March 2013	4345
April 2013	4670
May 2013	4858
June 2013	4542
July 2013	4794
August 2013	4436
TOTAL	47289

District Nurse and pharmacy letters were also addressed as part of the improvement in letter processes. Where previously the name and address was added to the Next of Kin contact details,

allowing only one other person to be informed of the patients dose and next test date, these are now added as an HCProfessional and added to patients as a contact. This means that each time a patient is dosed, a Next of Kin style contact letter is printed for each of the associated contacts.

Another time-consuming exercise in the form of hand written details into patients' yellow books was addressed through the setting up of labels within DAWN AC that were automatically printed and stuck into the yellow books, ensuring the instructions were legible and avoiding transcription errors.

Finally, having a single fax machine and telephone and with 40-50 calls a day meant just one person at a time being able to deal with calls was extremely resource intensive. A review of the communications system prompted an extra two telephones to be added and a scanner to enable letters, referrals and other communications to be attached to the patient record in DAWN AC.

Each of these individual improvements within DAWN AC has not only improved communications between the anticoagulation service, the patient and all health care professionals involved with the patients' care, ensuring they are fully informed, it has also made the service more efficient by saving paper costs and staff time.